

### 3.3 PARKS AND RECREATION

Public parks and recreation facilities within the City are important community resources. The parks are open to the public for various outdoor recreation activities, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, roller-blading, jogging, and educational uses (such as, nature walks, riparian and wetland studies, and elementary classroom activities and programs).

This section addresses the impacts of the No Action Alternative, the Existing I-25 Alternative, and the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) on parks and recreation facilities located within the study area. The analysis considers the affected environment and the environmental consequences of each of the alternatives. Mitigation measures to offset potential impacts from each Build Alternative are presented at the end of the section. While all park and recreational facilities in the study area were considered in the analysis and evaluated for impacts, only those that would be directly or indirectly affected by the project are addressed in this section.

Two key pieces of legislation were enacted in the 1960s to provide protection for public parks and recreation facilities. One is Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (known as Section 4(f)), and the other is Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965.

The Section 4(f) legislation provides protection for publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, and historic sites from conversion to a transportation use. The Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation may not approve a project that requires the use of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or historic site of national, state, or local significance unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the property and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use (23 CFR 774.3). Section 4(f) analyses were conducted for the project, and the results are documented in **Chapter 4 – Section 4(f) Evaluation**.

Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act ensures that federal investments in the LWCF are maintained for public outdoor recreation use. These properties include parks and

recreation facilities that have been developed with the assistance of LWCF grants. Five properties within the corridor were developed with LWCF grant assistance: Fountain Creek Park Land (which includes a portion of the Fountain Creek Trail), Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area (which includes a trail system and the Arkansas River Pedestrian Bridge), Runyon Field Sports Complex, Benedict Park, and JJ Raigoza Park. These properties are described in Section 3.3.1. The potential for impacts to Section 6(f)(3) assisted property is evaluated in Section 3.3.2, and proposed mitigation measures are detailed in Section 3.3.3.

#### 3.3.1 Affected Environment

Pueblo has numerous parks and recreation opportunities within the City and in the regional area, including small and large neighborhood parks, an extensive river trail system, sports ballparks and facilities, golf courses, auto and dog racing tracks, a zoo, nature center, and the Lake Pueblo State Park. The study area includes the following parks and recreation facilities, from north to south (shown in

**Exhibit 3.3-1**):

- ❖ Detention ponds (Pits Park) between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25
- ❖ Mineral Palace Park
- ❖ Fountain Creek Park Land and Trails
- ❖ Runyon Field Sports Complex
- ❖ Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area
- ❖ Arkansas River Corridor
- ❖ Benedict Park
- ❖ JJ Raigoza Park

All of the parks are owned by the City except the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, which is owned by the Pueblo Conservancy District and operated and maintained by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) as a State Wildlife Area, and the Runyon Field Sports Complex, which is owned by Pueblo County. A detailed analysis of each park and recreational facility was conducted in the study area. Brief descriptions of each park, from north to south, are provided in the following sections.



### 3.3.1.1 Detention Ponds Between 29th Street and 24th Street Adjacent to I-25

The detention ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25 on the west side of the highway (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) are commonly referred to as “Pits Park.” The ponds were constructed and are owned and maintained by the City Parks and Recreation Department for the primary purpose of providing flood control and water detention along the west side of I-25 (to intercept and impound surface water runoff); however, this area is also used for informal and unprogrammed recreation uses. The site consists of two areas: a 0.49-acre area at 23rd Street and Main Street, and a larger 11.16-acre area located between 24th Street and 28th Street along the west side of I-25. Each area is covered with turf and maintained by the City Parks and Recreation Department. The turf area is used by nearby residents as playfields for soccer and other recreational sports activities.



**Detention Ponds (Pits Park)**

### 3.3.1.2 Mineral Palace Park

Mineral Palace Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1** and in greater detail in **Exhibit 3.3-4**) is Pueblo's second largest park (after City Park). It is located on the west side of I-25, north of downtown. The 50.07-acre site is bounded by 19th Avenue on the north, 15th Avenue on the south, Court Street on the west, and I-25 on the east. A chain-link fence on the eastern boundary separates the park from the highway. Mineral Palace Park contains the maintenance headquarters for the City Parks and Recreation Department. The park features a small lake (Lake Clara) as well as an extensive network of flower gardens and landscaped park areas. Historic structures in the park include a band shell, pedestrian bridge, and boat house.

Historic Mineral Palace Park served as a tourist attraction from 1896 to 1943. In the early 1900s, the park extended south to 11th Street and east to the freight rail line that is currently located on the east side of I-25. The park was over 60 acres in size, and Lake Clara was three times larger than it is today. The original Mineral Palace building housed gems and minerals from around the world. In the ensuing years of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the park began its decline. For financial reasons, the City drained half of the lake and sold all of the parkland south of 14th Street.



**Original Mineral Palace Building**

During the late 1930s, due to a series of Works Progress Administration Projects (WPA), the park experienced a revival, and most of the existing walls and structures seen in the park today were constructed during the WPA era. After 1935, both Lake Clara and the park were again reduced in size as US 85/87 was constructed along the eastern edge of the park. The western edge of the lake was filled in, and a large lawn was created as a seating area for the band shell between the boathouse and the lake. The Mineral Palace building was removed in 1943, marking the end of its period as a tourist attraction.

Other additional uses were added to the park after World War II, deviating from the original design of the park. These included the public swimming pool and the regional parks maintenance facility. With the construction and opening of I-25 in 1959, Lake Clara was resituated and reduced in size, and Mineral Palace Park was reduced to its current size of approximately 50.07 acres.

Today, the boat house is used by the Pueblo Art Guild, and the band shell is not used as a music venue. Recreational amenities include a swimming pool, tennis courts, picnic tables, and playground equipment. According to the City



Parks and Recreation Department staff, the park is currently undersized based on current uses and community needs. The eastern edge of the park is currently underutilized due to noise from I-25 and the freight rail line, which runs parallel to I-25. A portion of the northeastern area of the park is isolated (including the tennis courts) and is, therefore, underutilized. The existing swimming pool facilities are aging and require a significant amount of maintenance and repair. Maintenance of the small, irregularly shaped lake is difficult due to issues such as poor water circulation and algae growth.



**Lake Clara at Mineral Palace Park**

### 3.3.1.3 Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail

The Fountain Creek Park Land, owned and managed by the City of Pueblo, is entirely located within the Fountain Creek floodplain. The parkland was purchased in 1971 with funds from the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (a former federal agency that was abolished in 1981) and consists of open space, a trail that serves regional and local bike traffic, a pedestrian trail, a location for environmental education opportunities at the elementary-school level, and a wildlife and naturally-vegetated corridor (City of Pueblo, 2004).

The Fountain Creek Park Land (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is approximately 400 acres of undeveloped, semi-arid high plains, predominantly covered with sagebrush, cactus, willow, cottonwood, and native grasses. Surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway provide habitat for wildlife. Stormwater runoff from I-25 currently runs untreated into Fountain Creek and the wetland areas in the parkland, causing sedimentation issues and impacting wildlife habitat.

Fountain Creek Trail (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) parallels I-25 on the east side of the highway and travels north and south along the Fountain Creek floodplain from north of 29th

Street to the Arkansas River. Paved bicycle and pedestrian trails are located along the east side of Fountain Creek, along with a few picnic tables. There are also a number of trailheads adjacent to the trail. Much of the property is currently inaccessible to areas west of Fountain Creek. Portions of the Fountain Creek Park Land and Fountain Creek Trail were developed with grants from the LWCF.



**Fountain Creek Park Land**

### 3.3.1.4 Runyon Field Sports Complex

The Runyon Field Sports Complex (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is located on the east side of I-25, north of the Arkansas River. It is a heavily used community recreational facility with a rich baseball history and is considered a regional recreational amenity. The complex consists of four lighted baseball fields, including two regulation-sized diamonds, an intermediate field, and a small youth field. Associated with all four fields are concession stands, announcing booths, a clubhouse, permanent seating (bleachers), and paved parking.



**Runyon Field Sports Complex**

The Runyon Field Sports Complex was first established in the 1930s. In 1985, two additional fields were added to the complex, and a fourth field was added in 1994. In 1999, a new \$300,000 club house was constructed and the original fence around Runyon/Hobbs Field was replaced. The land

and facilities associated with the complex are owned by Pueblo County, and the complex is operated by the Runyon Board of Directors, a nonprofit organization. The property was developed with assistance from the LWCF.

In 2010, more than 1,600 games were played by more than 97 youth teams (age 14 and under) at the Runyon Field Sports Complex. In addition, 21 high school and college teams use these fields. High school and middle school girls' softball teams also play home games at the Runyon Field Sports Complex. The baseball/softball season runs 6 days per week from April to October. All the fields are lighted, and night games are frequent. Access to the complex is from the Ilex Street interchange from I-25. The traffic generated by events at the complex has been known to backup through the interchange, often extending as far as I-25.

#### 3.3.1.5 Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

The Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1** and in greater detail in **Exhibit 3.3-2**) is a 40-acre wildlife protection area owned by the Pueblo Conservancy District and maintained and operated by the CPW. The lake and park area are located along the Arkansas River east of Santa Fe Avenue and south of the Runyon Field Sports Complex. The wildlife area provides public recreation opportunities, including shore fishing, hiking, picnicking, and wildlife watching. The park facilities include restrooms, three Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant fishing piers, a biking and hiking trail, park benches, a memorial park bench, and a gravel surface parking lot, as shown in **Exhibit 3.3-2**. Downstream of the Arkansas River levee, a pedestrian bridge over the river connects the Fountain Creek and Arkansas River trails. The pedestrian bridge is owned and maintained by the City of Pueblo. North of Runyon Lake, the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail connects Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area to the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk of Pueblo (HARP).

A LWCF grant was awarded to the City of Pueblo in 1983 for the development of the pedestrian bridge and connecting trail and was amended to add picnic areas. LWCF funds also were used to develop the trails surrounding Runyon Lake.

#### 3.3.1.6 Arkansas River Corridor

The Arkansas River Corridor (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) extends east from the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife

Area to Lake Pueblo State Park. The area encompasses 280 acres of land in the corridor, including the water surface of the Arkansas River and the channelized embankment of the river. It serves as the site for the Arkansas River Trail that parallels the river and connects to various amenities in the community. In addition, the Pueblo Whitewater Park is a kayaking course on this section of the river that starts at the 4th Street bridge and continues to the Union bridge at Corona Street, upstream of the I-25 crossing of the Arkansas River. The area beyond the Union bridge is not used for recreation due to dangerous conditions such as debris or hydraulic backwash from a low-head dam.

#### 3.3.1.7 Benedict Park

Benedict Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is located east of I-25 adjacent to the former St. Mary's School, now home to the St. Mary's Genealogy Center and John Gornick Slovenian Library. The 1.92-acre park was once associated with the school, but St. Mary's turned the site over to the City in 1980. Since that time, the City of Pueblo has owned and maintained it as a neighborhood park, primarily serving the nearby residents in the Bessemer neighborhood. The site is located on East Mesa Avenue east of I-25 and west of Eilers Avenue. Outdoor recreational facilities include an informal softball field with a backstop, turf grass, a basketball court, playground equipment, and picnic tables. The park is irrigated and has a working sprinkler system. A chain link fence provides a barrier between the park and Mesa Avenue. The park currently has no parking, pedestrian pathways, restrooms, or lighting. Benedict Park was developed with assistance from the LWCF.

A LWCF grant was awarded to the City of Pueblo in 1980 for the development of irrigation within Benedict Park.



**Benedict Park**



## EXHIBIT 3.3-2

## Facilities at the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area



### 3.3.1.8 JJ Raigoza Park

JJ Raigoza Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is a 7.85-acre park roughly bound by Maryland Avenue to the north, Pine Avenue to the west, and I-25 to the southeast. The park primarily serves the Bessemer Neighborhood with amenities that include a tennis court, basketball court, playground equipment, restroom, and picnic table. The property was developed with assistance from the LWCF.



**JJ Raigoza Park**

Further detail on parks in the project area may be found in the *Parks Technical Memorandum, New Pueblo Freeway* (CH2M HILL, 2010c).

## 3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

To help the CDOT Project Team avoid and/or minimize impacts to the parks, a Park Advisory Committee (PAC) was established. The PAC was made up of local citizens and staff from the City Parks and Recreation Department, the City Planning Department, and the County Parks Department. Through a series of workshops, the PAC helped develop park mitigation plans. More information about the PAC activities can be found in **Chapter 6 – Comments and Coordination**.

This section analyzes impacts to parks in the corridor. **Chapter 4 –Section 4(f) Evaluation** also provides detailed descriptions of impacts and mitigation measures for Mineral Palace Park, Fountain Creek Park Land, Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, and Benedict Park. This section also addresses impacts to properties protected under Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act.

### 3.3.2.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not have any direct impacts to any parks in the corridor.

Existing effects to the park facilities due to the proximity of roads to the parks, including noise and visual impacts, would continue. Access to the Runyon Field Sports Complex would remain difficult before and after sporting events, with queues extending onto I-25.

Under the No Action Alternative, continued sedimentation and pollutant loading from stormwater runoff into surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway could adversely affect wildlife habitat in the Fountain Creek Park Land.

### 3.3.2.2 Build Alternatives

This section describes the impacts of the Build Alternatives to each of the parks and recreation facilities adjacent to I-25.

Either Build Alternative would result in the conversion of Section 6(f)(3) assisted property. The LWCF Act requires that, prior to conversion of Section 6(f)(3) assisted property, the agency proposing the conversion must ensure that all practical alternatives to the conversion have been evaluated and rejected on a sound basis. The Section 6(f)(3) assisted properties affected by the project are also protected by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, which requires a thorough analysis of avoidance alternatives. Six alternatives were evaluated for their potential to avoid all of the Section 4(f) and Section 6(f)(3) properties in the corridor. None of these alternatives were carried forward because they either did not meet the Purpose and Need for the project or would not avoid Section 4(f) or Section 6(f)(3) assisted properties. For a detailed description of these alternatives and the reasons they were dismissed, see **Chapter 4 – Section 4(f) Evaluation, Section 4.5**. Site-specific avoidance options also were evaluated for their potential to avoid each Section 6(f)(3) assisted property. This analysis is documented in correspondence with the CPW dated June 25, 2012 (see **Appendix B**).



**North Area (Phase 1)**

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-3**, both Build Alternatives would directly impact Mineral Palace Park and the Fountain Creek Park Land. The detention ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25 and the Fountain Creek Trail would not be directly impacted by the Build Alternatives; however, there is a potential for noise impacts. Direct impacts to parks and recreation facilities in the North Area (Phase 1) are described in detail below and featured in **Exhibits 3.3-4, 3.3-5, and 3.3-6**.

**Detention Ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street Adjacent to I-25**

Widening I-25 adjacent to the detention ponds would not impact the recreational uses of the ponds. The detention ponds are currently maintained by the City, and maintenance access would be retained. The two Build Alternatives include noise barriers to be built in CDOT right-of-way (ROW) to protect the detention ponds and surrounding neighborhoods from noise. With the noise barriers in place, the ponds would experience noise levels of approximately 58 to 61 A-weighted decibels (dBA), which is less than noise levels experienced at the park today. Noise impacts are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**. No property acquisition would occur as a result of the Build Alternatives.

**Mineral Palace Park**

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-3**, I-25 is located between Mineral Palace Park to the west and an active historic rail line to the east, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Both the park and the railroad property are directly adjacent to CDOT ROW, which presented a design challenge for widening the highway.

Both Build Alternatives would impact Mineral Palace Park as follows:

- ❖ Widening I-25 adjacent to the park would result in loss of a strip approximately 50 feet wide along the eastern 1,500-foot edge of the park, which translates into approximately 1.69 acres (3 percent of the 50.07 acre park). This is the part of the park that is not currently used by recreationists because its current noise levels are approximately 65 dBA.
- ❖ The loss of the eastern portion of the park would result in loss of the northeast park road leading to a parking lot, as well as about 40 parking spaces, grass, small shrubs, and approximately 20 mature trees.

- ❖ Fifteen to 20 percent of Lake Clara would be eliminated, rendering it unable to function as a viable lake. The lake has been reduced in size several times in the past, making the un-functioning lake small and irregularly shaped and making healthy water circulation difficult. Highway improvements will further exacerbate the lake condition.
- ❖ A section totaling approximately 40 linear feet of a WPA lake wall would be eliminated along Lake Clara.
- ❖ Approximately 13 percent of the existing acreage of the park maintenance yard, located in the northeast corner of Mineral Palace Park, would be lost.
- ❖ The informal path that generally follows the eastern fence would be severed and would have to be reconnected.
- ❖ Construction of noise barriers would be needed to protect the park from additional noise impacts. With noise mitigation in place, the park would experience a decrease in noise levels of approximately 5 to 7 dBA. Noise impacts to Mineral Palace Park are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

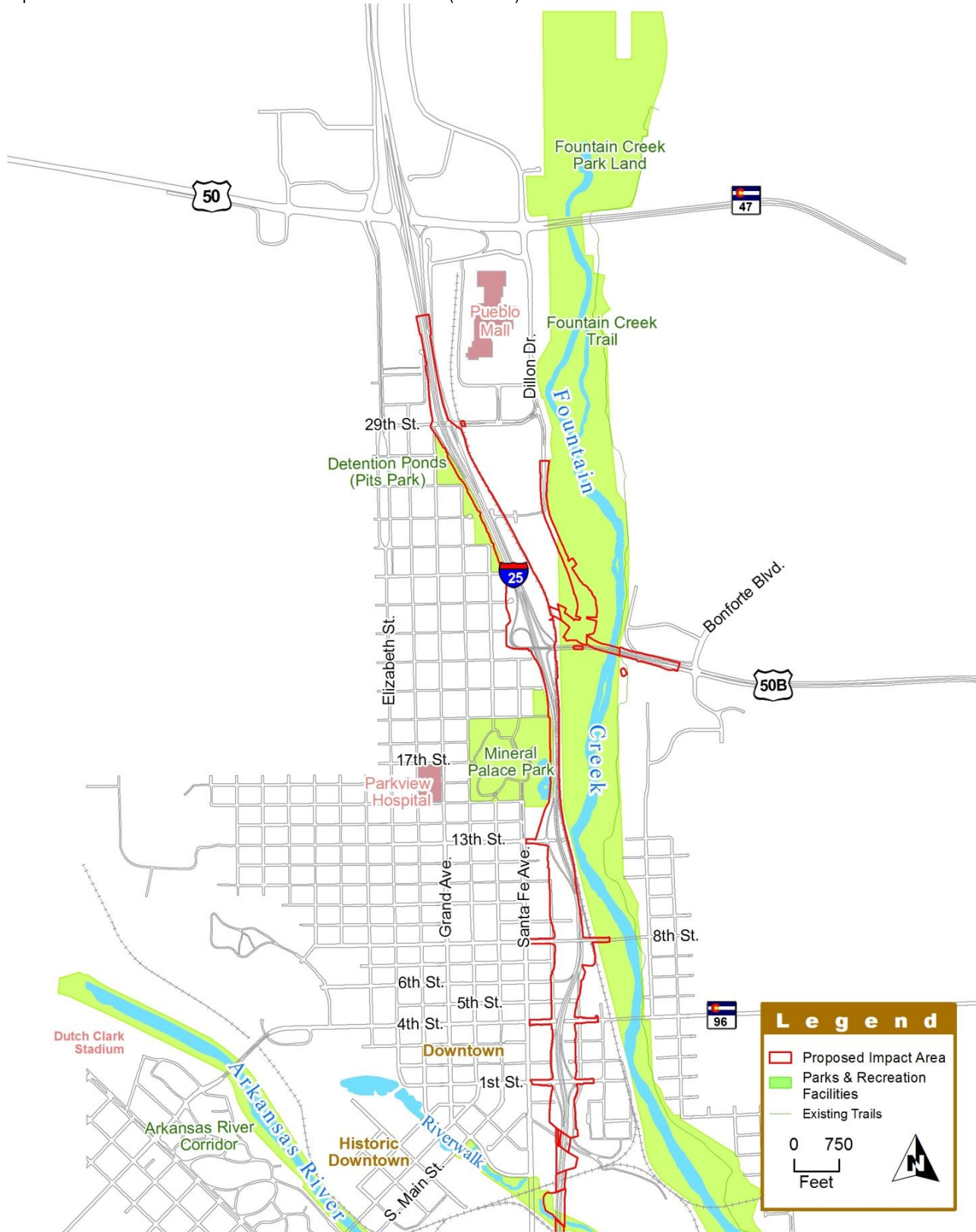
The project impacts described above are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-4**.

**Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail**

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-5** and **Exhibit 3.3-6**, the Build Alternatives would impact 7.68 acres of the Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail as follows:

- ❖ The extension of Dillon Drive to US 50B requires acquisition of undeveloped parkland along the east side of Fountain Creek, north of US 50B. This area around the extended road is made up of low-quality riparian habitat. Both the Existing I-25 Alternative and Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) would use 3.95 acres of parkland for the Dillon Drive extension. An additional 1 acre of land would be temporarily occupied during construction, but would be re-graded and reopened to recreation prior to project completion.
- ❖ The relocation of US 50B to the north and widening of US 50B over Fountain Creek would use approximately 2.17 acres of the parkland. An additional 1 acre of land would be temporarily occupied during construction, but would be re-graded and reopened to recreation prior to project completion.

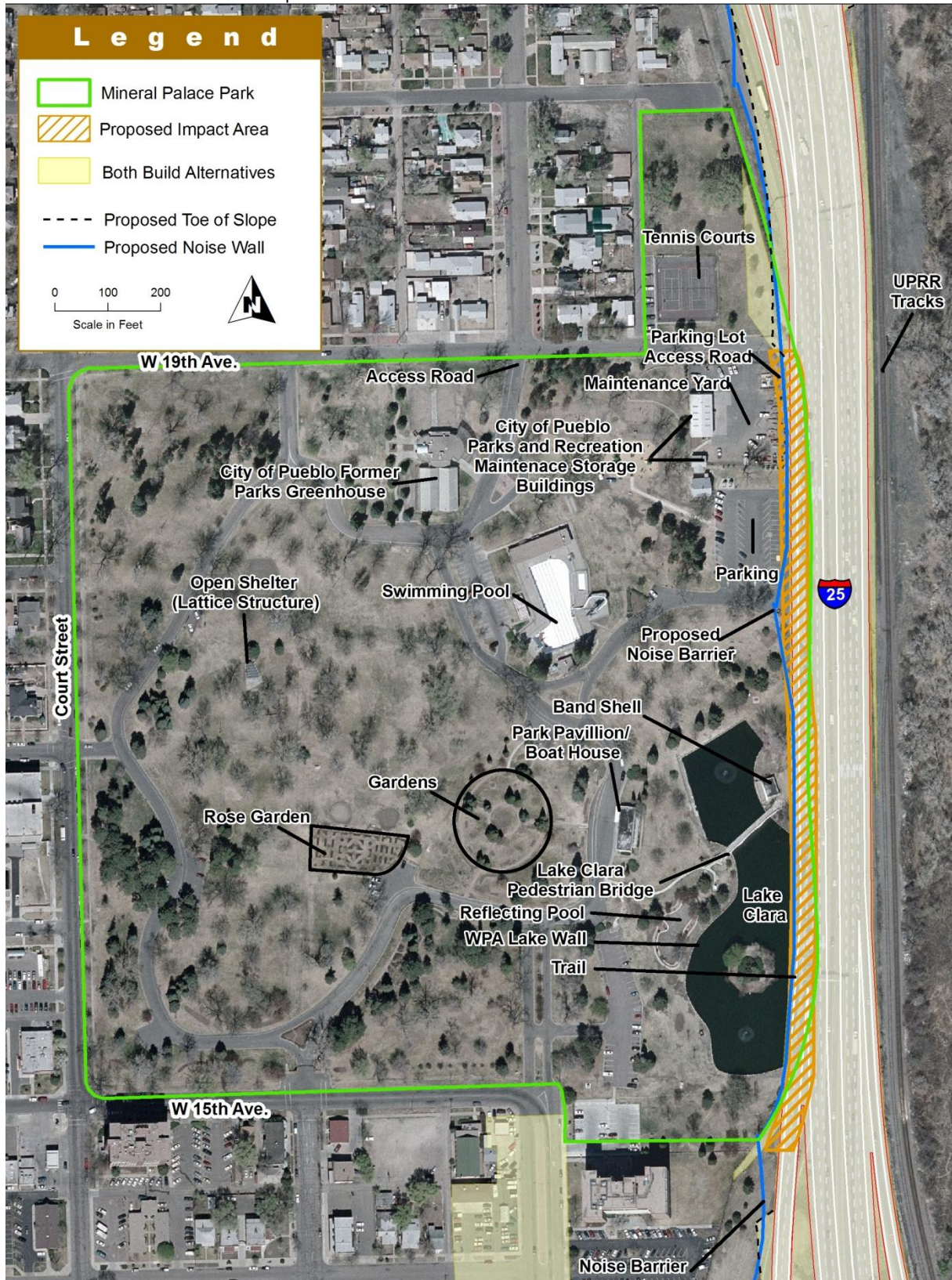


**EXHIBIT 3.3-3****Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the North Area (Phase 1)**

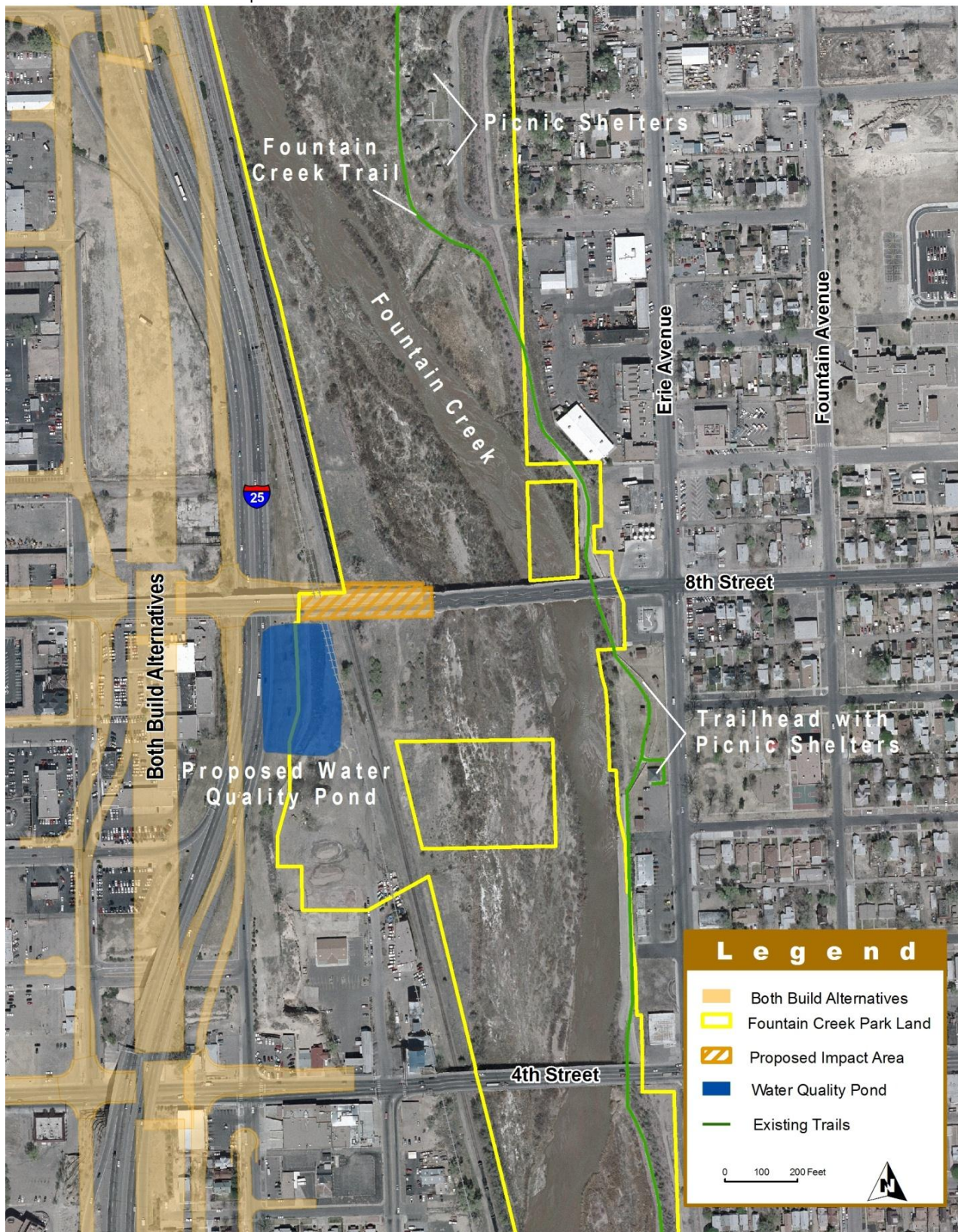


## EXHIBIT 3.3-4

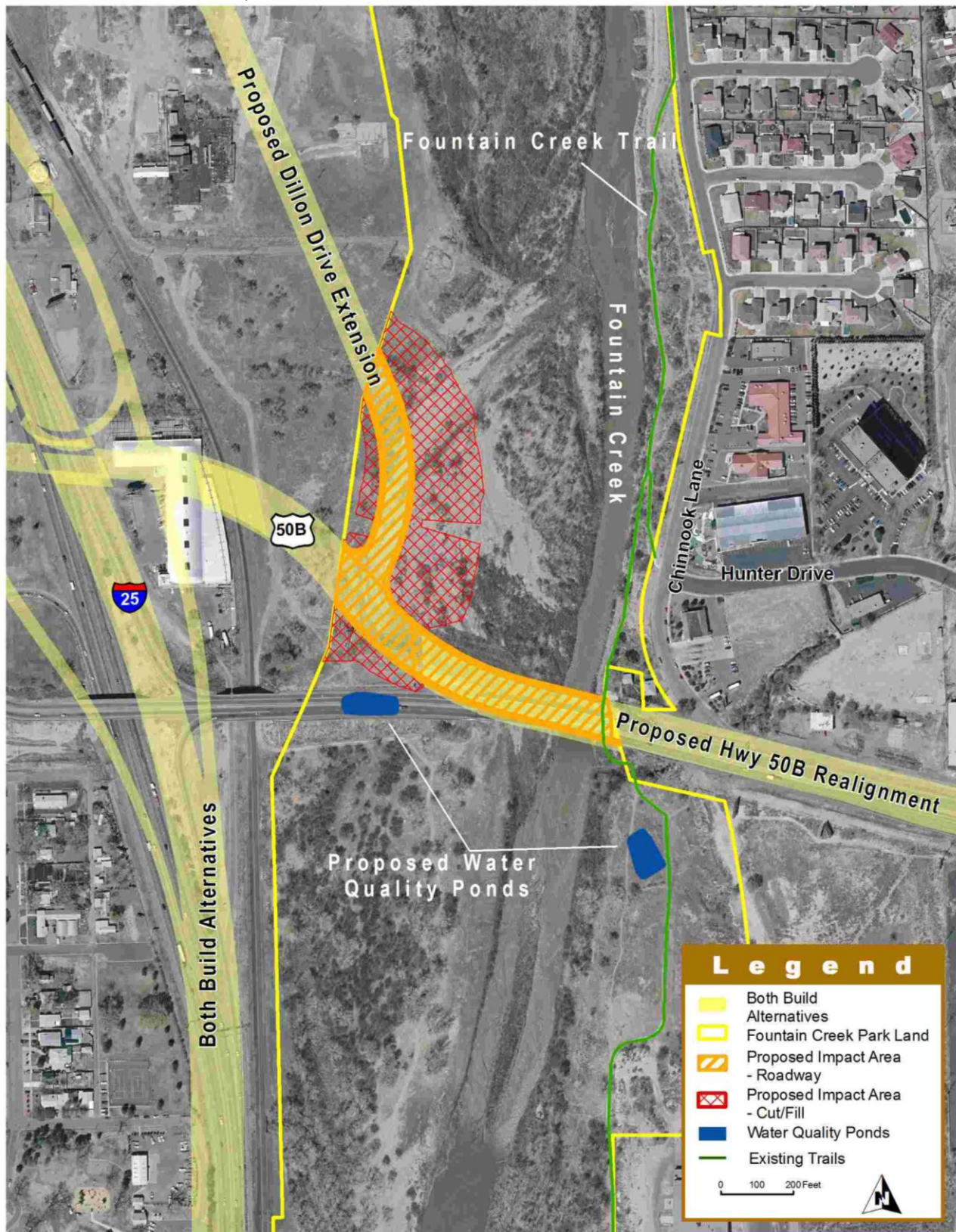
## Mineral Palace Park Features and Impacts of the Build Alternatives





**EXHIBIT 3.3-5**Fountain Creek Park Land and Impacts of the Build Alternatives at 8<sup>th</sup> Street



**EXHIBIT 3.3-6****Fountain Creek Park Land and Impacts of the Build Alternatives at US 50B**

- ❖ An improved connection to 8th Street on the east side of I-25 would require acquisition of approximately 0.14 acres of the parkland. The improvements would include the addition of two new sidewalks along the bridge. This portion of the Fountain Creek Park Land does not currently serve any active recreational purpose and is separated from the rest of the Fountain Creek Park Land by an active railroad line.
- ❖ Stormwater detention features included in the Build Alternatives will capture stormwater runoff and reduce the amount of pollution and sediment that reach surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway. This would impact 1.42 acres of the property, but would have a beneficial effect on the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ Temporary detours and/or closures of the Fountain Creek Trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

Of the 7.68 acres of land that would be acquired from the Fountain Creek Park Land for the project, 6.26 acres would need to be replaced in an equal value exchange in accordance with the LWCF Act. The 1.42 acres of land associated with the stormwater detention features would not be considered a conversion of Section 6(f)(3) assisted property because the ponds would remain open for recreation and would still function as open space. The replacement property would need to be of reasonably equivalent usefulness, monetary value, and location.

#### **South Area (Phase 2)**

JJ Raigoza Park is the only park located in the South Area (Phase 2) of the project. As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-7**, neither Build Alternative would require ROW from JJ Raigoza Park and no Section 6(f)(3) assisted land or facilities would be converted. The Build Alternatives include a noise barrier to protect the park from noise. With the noise barriers in place, the park would experience noise levels of approximately 63 dBA, which is less than noise levels experienced at the park today. Noise impacts to JJ Raigoza Park are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

#### **Central Area (Phase 2)**

##### Existing I-25 Alternative

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-8**, the Existing I-25 Alternative would not impact the Runyon Field Sports Complex; however, this alternative would affect the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, the Arkansas River Corridor, and Benedict Park. Impacts to these resources are described in detail below.

##### Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

Construction of the Existing I-25 Alternative would temporarily impact the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-2**), which is a part of the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area. Temporary detours and/or closures of the trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically, when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured). No other impacts to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are expected.

##### Arkansas River Corridor

The Existing I-25 Alternative would require construction of a new bridge just to the east of the current I-25 bridge crossing the Arkansas River. Temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

##### Benedict Park

The Existing I-25 Alternative would impact the west side of Benedict Park as follows:

- ❖ The relocation of the historic freight rail line to the east of the current location would require the use of approximately 0.42 acre of land from the western edge of the park. This means that 1.50 acres of the park would remain, leaving a smaller park that would still function as a neighborhood “pocket” park.
- ❖ The informal athletic field would be eliminated; however, the playgrounds and basketball court could continue to be used by the neighborhood.

The impacts of the Existing I-25 Alternative to Benedict Park are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-9**.

The 0.42 acre of land that would be acquired from Benedict Park would need to be replaced in an equal value exchange



**EXHIBIT 3.3-7****Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the South Area (Phase 2)**



**EXHIBIT 3.3-8**

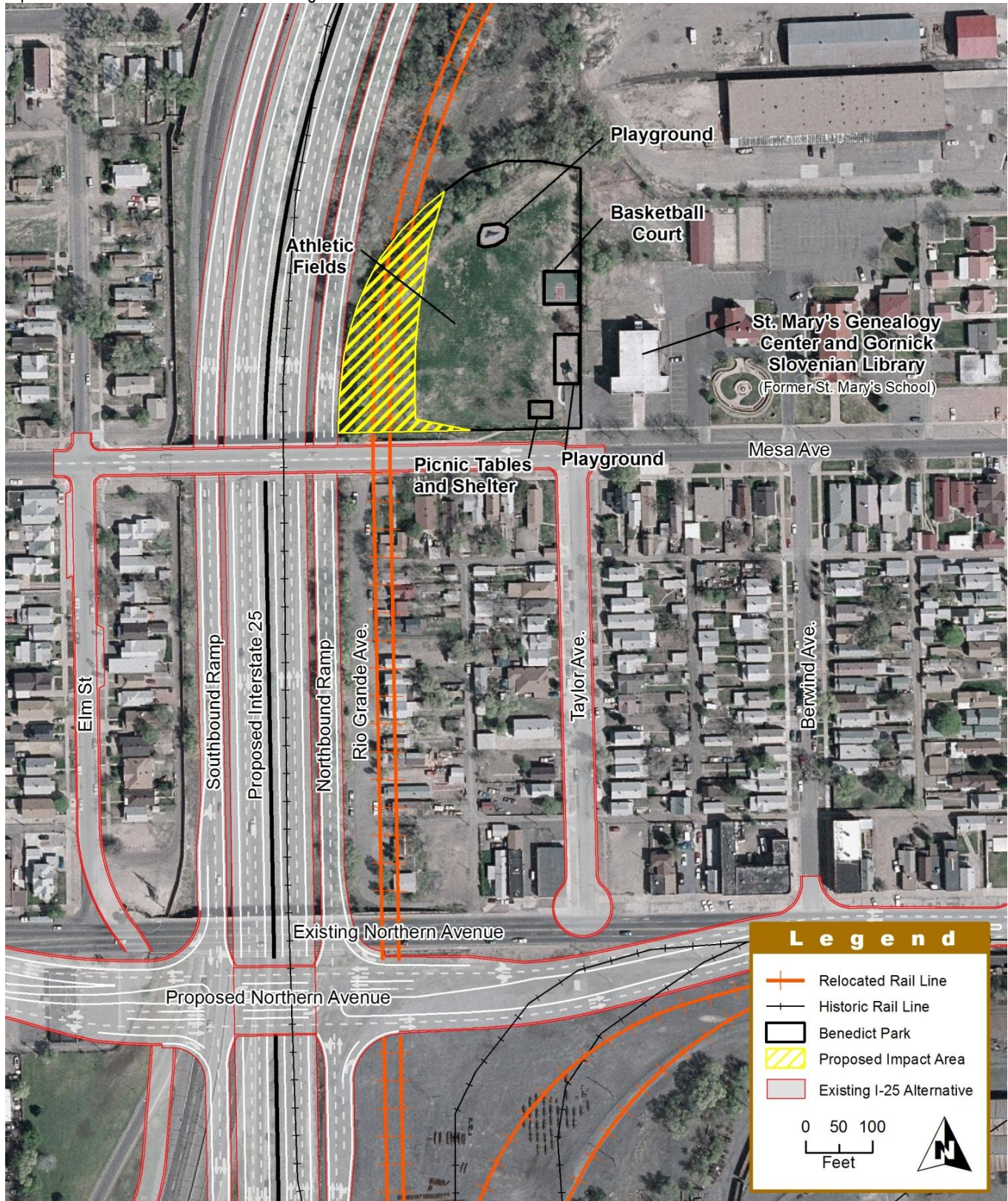
Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the Central Area (Phase 2) under the Existing I-25 Alternative





**EXHIBIT 3.3-9**

Impacts to Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative





in accordance with the LWCF Act. The replacement property would need to be of reasonably equivalent usefulness, monetary value, and location.

Coordination between CDOT and the City resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 2010 in which the City agreed to allow CDOT to use Benedict Park for the New Pueblo Freeway Project and CDOT agreed to mitigate the impacts to the park as described later in this section (see **Appendix F**).

#### *Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)*

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-10**, the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) would have impacts to all of the parklands in the Central Area (Phase 2). These impacts are described in detail below.

#### Runyon Field Sports Complex

The Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) would have no direct impact to the Runyon Field Sports Complex. Under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative), Stanton Avenue would be extended north and west to Santa Fe Avenue and south to Santa Fe Drive. Access to the Runyon Field Sports Complex would be provided from Stanton Avenue, allowing visitors to reach the park from the local street system rather than the off-ramp from I-25. This new road network would eliminate the queues of vehicles traveling to the Runyon Field Sports Complex that extend onto the highway, resulting in a benefit to the users of the complex and I-25. This benefit is not possible under the Existing I-25 Alternative.

#### Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

Impacts of the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-11** and detailed below.

- ❖ The Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) realigns the current I-25 alignment to the east, starting south of Ilex Street. The new highway alignment would require the construction of four new bridges over the Arkansas River and within the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area. **Exhibit 3.3-11** illustrates how most of the I-25 mainline and adjacent ramps would bridge over park property; however, bridge abutments on the south side of the river would be placed in some of the State Wildlife Area.
- ❖ Stanton Avenue would be extended south on a bridge over the State Wildlife Area and the Arkansas River.

- ❖ Eighteen new bridge piers would be placed in the State Wildlife Area to support the bridges for I-25 and for the extension of Stanton Avenue. These improvements would impact 2.81 acres of the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 0.02 acre of this impact represents the land that would need to be acquired for the bridge piers. The remaining 2.79 acres of impact result from the new fill material that would be placed to support the slope from the new bridges, as well as the configuration of the structures, which would make the land between the ramps and the roadway inaccessible and no longer useful for recreation. The existing bridge piers that support I-25 would remain within the State Wildlife Area to carry Santa Fe Avenue. The old Santa Fe/US 50B Bridge over the Arkansas River would be removed, which would remove one pier from the State Wildlife Area.
- ❖ The existing pedestrian bridge that crosses the Arkansas River, connecting Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area on the north side of the river to the Arkansas River Trail on the south, would be removed to allow room for the I-25 bridges to span the river.
- ❖ The trail that leads to the footbridge would be relocated with a bridge that allows for crossing the Arkansas River and reconnecting to the Arkansas River Trail. The park benches and the memorial park bench would be moved to the east.
- ❖ The Thomas Phelps Creek Trail (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-2**) would be temporarily impacted by the construction of the I-25 mainline. Temporary detours and/or closures of the trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically, when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured). No other impacts to Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are expected.

The 2.81 acres of land that would be converted from recreational use from within the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area<sup>1</sup> and the Arkansas River pedestrian bridge would need to be replaced in an equal value exchange in accordance with the LWCF Act. The replacement property would need to be of reasonably equivalent usefulness, monetary value, and location.

<sup>1</sup> Based on boundary maps for the project, it is unclear whether this land is within the legal boundary for this property. This will be resolved in further consultation with CPW as the project is developed and funded.



**EXHIBIT 3.3-10**

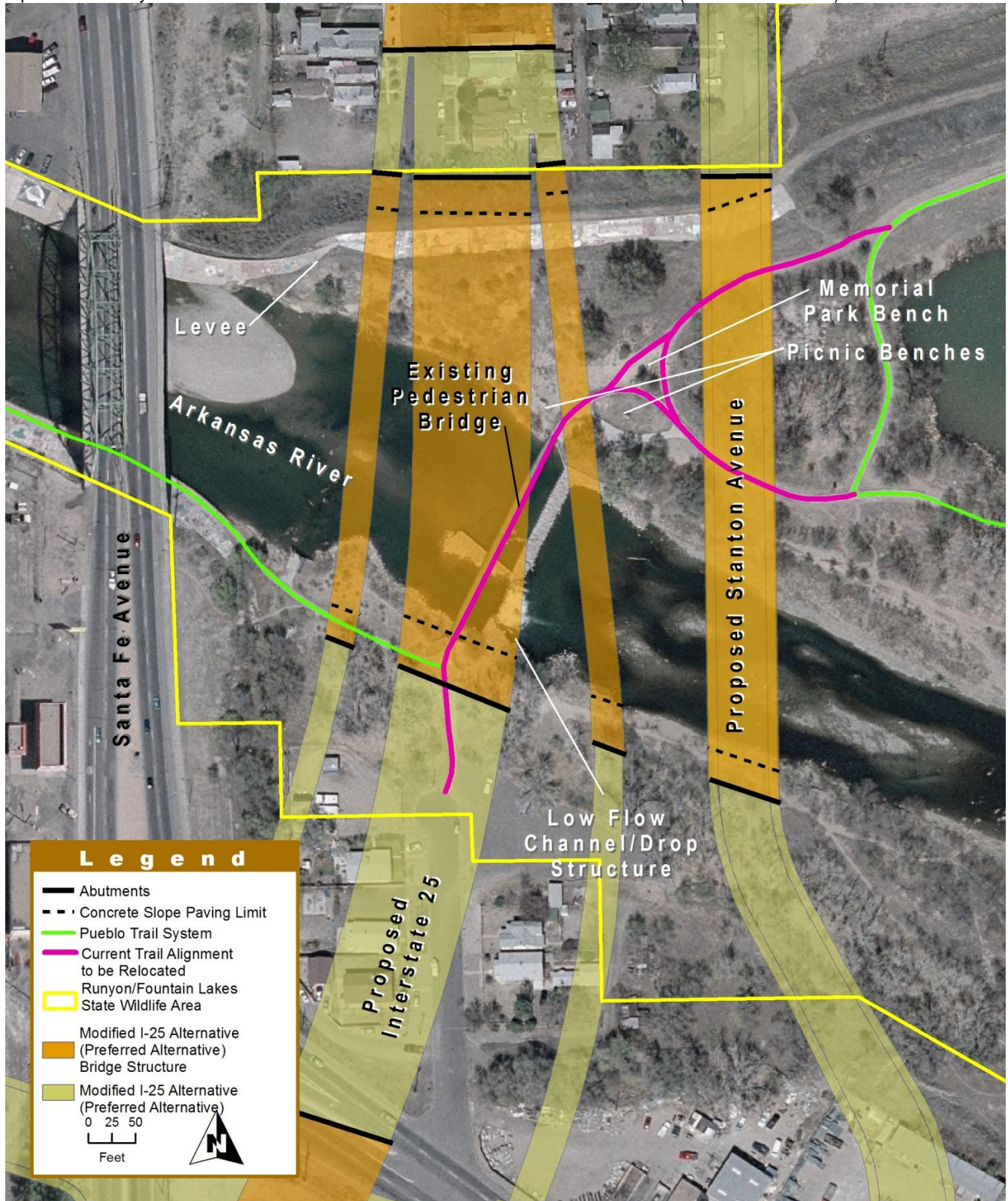
Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the Central Area (Phase 2) under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)





**EXHIBIT 3.3-11**

Impacts to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)



### Arkansas River Corridor

Under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative), new bridges east of the current I-25 bridge crossing the Arkansas River would be constructed. Temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

### Benedict Park

The Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) would impact Benedict Park by completely shifting the highway east onto park property. The freight rail line would stay in its current location. All recreational elements would be removed. Impacts to Benedict Park are illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-12**.

Benedict Park would need to be replaced in an equal value exchange in accordance with the LWCF Act. The replacement property would need to be of reasonably equivalent usefulness, monetary value, and location.

Coordination between CDOT and the City resulted in a MOU in March 2010 in which the City agreed to allow CDOT to use Benedict Park for the New Pueblo Freeway Project and CDOT agreed to mitigate the impacts to the park as described later in this section (see **Appendix F**).

### **3.3.3 Mitigation**

Unless otherwise specified, the following mitigations apply to both the Existing I-25 Alternative and the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative). The following mitigation actions were developed in cooperation with citizens through the PAC workshops to be implemented during final design and construction activities.

CDOT will assure that there is an equal value exchange for all Section 6(f)(3) property acquired. Such exchange will be valued according to the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 for both properties acquired and for any properties used as part of the payment. In all situations where the valuation of the property acquired exceeds the value of the property to be used as payment, the difference shall be paid as cash, and that cash shall be used in a manner consistent with Section 6(f) principles. Appraisals are conducted as part of CDOT's right-of-way process,

which occurs once design is more complete and project funds have been identified.

CDOT has coordinated with CPW and the DOI with regards to the conversion of Section 6(f)(3) assisted property (see correspondence dated June 25, 2012 and July 10, 2012 in **Appendix B**). The official conversion request and DOI concurrence will occur prior to project completion, and the value of the land will be assessed prior to the DOI final approval.

### ***Detention Ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street, Adjacent to I-25***

To alleviate potential noise impacts from I-25, CDOT will place two noise barriers between 29th Street and 24th Street on the east side parallel to I-25, starting at the north end and ending in the south. The barrier will mitigate potential noise from traffic on I-25 after roadway improvements have been made. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

### ***Mineral Palace Park***

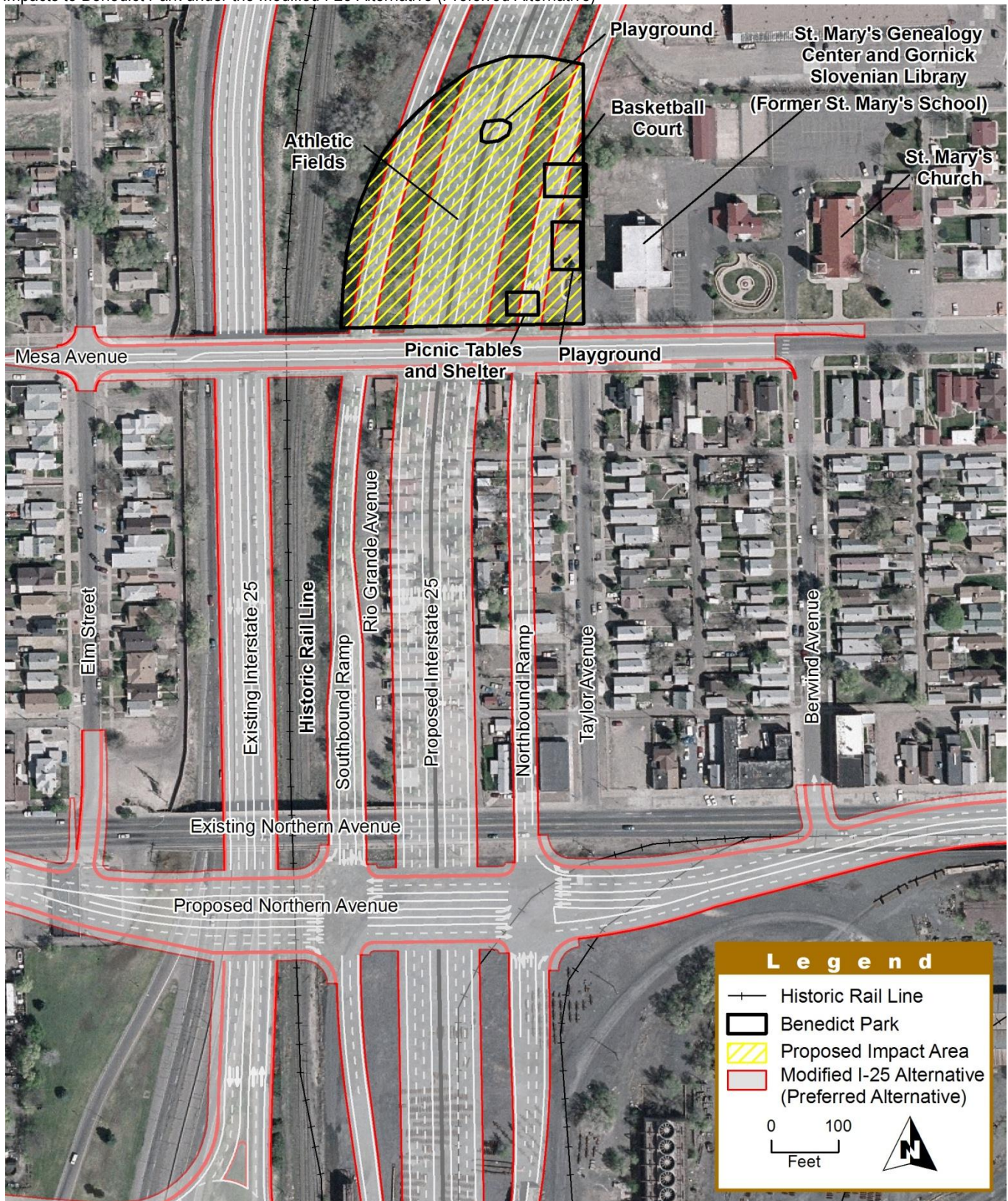
City staff and citizens participated in an extensive public involvement process by the PAC as described earlier to determine adequate mitigation for impacts to Mineral Palace Park. This process resulted in the development of a restoration plan for the park that is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-13**. The restoration plan will adhere to a theme of celebrating the past and connecting to neighborhoods. The restoration plan is a master plan for the park restoration in general, not a design plan. Key components of the plan include the following:

- ❖ **Increase the size of Mineral Palace Park to 52.38 acres.** Land will be added adjacent to the park, south to 13th Street and north to the US 50B loop. Implementation of the mitigation measures for the park has been stipulated in a MOU between the City and CDOT (see **Appendix F**). The MOU contains commitments from CDOT to construct park improvements and lays out the responsibilities of the City to accept ownership and maintenance responsibility for those improvements, once completed.
- ❖ **Relocate the swimming pool.** The existing swimming pool will be moved out of the existing park. Although the pool is an important community amenity, it is not consistent with the historical uses of the park.



**EXHIBIT 3.3-12**

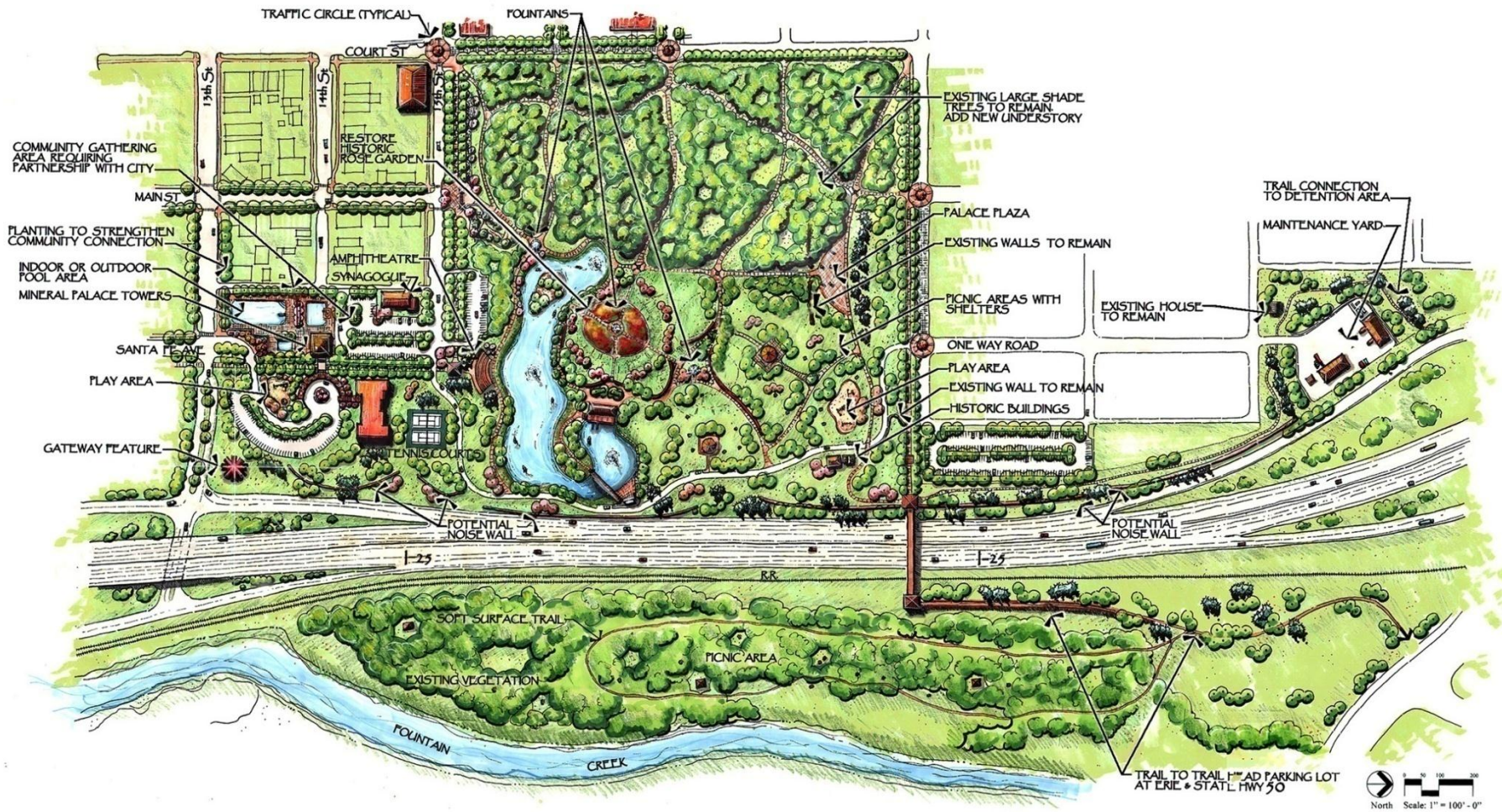
Impacts to Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)





## EXHIBIT 3.3-13

## Mineral Palace Park Master Plan - Mitigation





- ❖ **Add new parking.** The parking that will be lost as a result of the I-25 widening will be replaced with new parking lots that include several handicap parking spaces in both the southern and northern parts of the park.
- ❖ **Construct a pedestrian bridge.** A pedestrian bridge will be constructed over I-25 to connect Mineral Palace Park to the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ **Add noise mitigation structures.** Noise mitigation features (such as walls and earthen berms) will be added to reduce noise from I-25. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.
- ❖ **Add vegetation.** Vegetation will be planted along proposed sound walls and berms to soften views into and out of the park. More trees will be planted in the park as a nursery crop to replace the current shade trees that are on the decline because they are well over 100 years old.
- ❖ **Enlarge Lake Clara.** Lake Clara will be expanded so that it will function as a healthy lake with adequate space.
- ❖ **Move the maintenance facility.** The maintenance facility will be relocated out of the park to add more usable parkland.
- ❖ **Construct a fountain.** A fountain will be constructed to look similar to the original fountain that was once present in the park and was removed prior to the development of this project.
- ❖ **Relocate activities.** Facilities and activity areas that are not noise sensitive will be moved closer to the highway.
- ❖ **Increase access to the park and within the park.** Increased access will be provided by adding additional trail connections and improving the internal roadway and walk systems within the park.
- ❖ **Construct an amphitheater.** An amphitheater will be constructed to help reintroduce concerts and events to the park.
- ❖ **Construct a palace plaza.** A plaza will be constructed at the site of the original Mineral Palace to provide a place in the park where historical interpretation of Mineral Palace Park can be displayed.
- ❖ **Improve handicap access.** Handicap-accessible ramps and parking areas will be constructed, along with appropriate surfaces throughout the park.

- ❖ **Reconnect the boathouse with Lake Clara.** Lake Clara will be enlarged so the boathouse will be reconnected to the lake.
- ❖ **Introduce traffic calming features.** State-of-the-art traffic-calming techniques will be incorporated, where appropriate, to slow traffic along the perimeter of the park.
- ❖ **Restore the gardens.** Some of the gardens around the park will be restored to their historic splendor.

#### ***Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail***

The following mitigation measures for the Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail would be implemented for both Build Alternatives.

- ❖ The existing US 50B alignment will be removed and the land within the floodplain will be turned over to the City of Pueblo to be part of the Fountain Creek Park Land. A total of 3.3 acres will be deeded to the City for recreational purposes, and this land is contiguous with the existing Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ A detour for users of the Fountain Creek Trail will be provided during construction. The specific detour route will be determined during final design. Public notice of any closures and detour routes will be conducted prior to any closures, and signage and other instructions will be posted and maintained.
- ❖ Stormwater detention ponds will be built within the existing floodplain to capture stormwater runoff from the roadways to reduce impacts on vegetation and wildlife in the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ Areas of temporary occupancy will be regraded, revegetated, and returned to pre-construction conditions for recreational use after construction.
- ❖ Recreational access to the western bank of Fountain Creek, which is currently not accessible to pedestrians, will be provided via construction of a soft-surface trail, and additional picnic tables will be installed.
- ❖ The Dillon Drive extension will include sidewalks that will improve access to the western bank of the Fountain Creek Park Land, which currently has extremely limited accessibility.
- ❖ Pedestrian and motor vehicle access to recreational opportunities of the Fountain Creek Park Land will be improved by reconstructing 8th Street at I-25 and improving sidewalks.

- ❖ New pedestrian signage will be added to improve awareness of, and guide residents to, the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ A new information kiosk will be installed at Mineral Palace Park directing users to recreational opportunities along Fountain Creek (to be accessible from Mineral Palace Park via a new pedestrian bridge over I-25) and the role of LWCF in supporting preservation of outdoor recreation in this area.

#### **Arkansas River Corridor**

CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of river closures or temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail during construction. Access will be maintained as much as possible to minimize impacts to users.

#### **JJ Raigoza Park**

CDOT will construct noise mitigation structures to reduce the noise impact to the Evans area between Maryland Avenue and Nevada Avenue. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

#### **3.3.3.1 Mitigation for the Existing I-25 Alternative**

The following mitigation measures would be implemented specifically under the Existing I-25 Alternative.

##### **Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area**

CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of temporary detours and/or closures of the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail during construction. Access will be maintained as much as possible to minimize impacts to users.

##### **Benedict Park**

CDOT will construct a 2.13-acre expansion of Benedict Park to the south of the existing park. The expanded park will total 4.05 acres, which will include remnant parcels of the land required for the relocation of the railroad, as described in **Section 3.1 Transportation**. The existing playground equipment and a paved basketball court will remain.

The mitigation for Benedict Park is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-14** and **Exhibit 3.3-15**. The new park plans proposed under the Existing I-25 Alternative will address several issues at the existing park, including lack of parking (the new park plan includes on-street parking along Taylor Street) and the need for a shelter house, trees, and improved lighting.

#### **3.3.3.2 Mitigation for the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)**

The following mitigation measures would be implemented specifically under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative).

##### **Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area**

The following mitigation measures were developed by the CDOT Project Team with input from the public and City staff.

- ❖ The Arkansas River Pedestrian Bridge and connecting trail would be reconstructed just east of the proposed Stanton Avenue Bridge (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-16**). It will be developed in consultation with both the City of Pueblo and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Division.
  - ❖ Detours or other safe and appropriate accommodations for users of the trails will be provided where possible. Public notice of any closures and detour routes will be conducted prior to any closures, and signage and other instructions will be posted and maintained.
  - ❖ Trees and plantings will be included in the project to offset any loss of vegetation from shading that would occur under the new bridges.
  - ❖ The additional bridge piers would not preclude the City of Pueblo's plans for a boat crossing of the Arkansas River.
  - ❖ Any impacted trail segments that are currently surfaced with asphalt will be replaced and upgraded with concrete.
  - ❖ The Stanton Avenue extension will also provide additional parking for the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area.
  - ❖ At least 0.66 mile of new trail will be constructed in the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, including a trail that will connect the Runyon Field Sports Complex and the Arkansas River area with several neighborhood parks to the south that are currently disconnected from recreational resources north of the Arkansas River, as shown in **Exhibit 3.3-16**.
- A sign acknowledging assistance from the LWCF will be posted in a prominent public area visible to all visitors.

The mitigation for the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-16**.



**EXHIBIT 3.3-14**

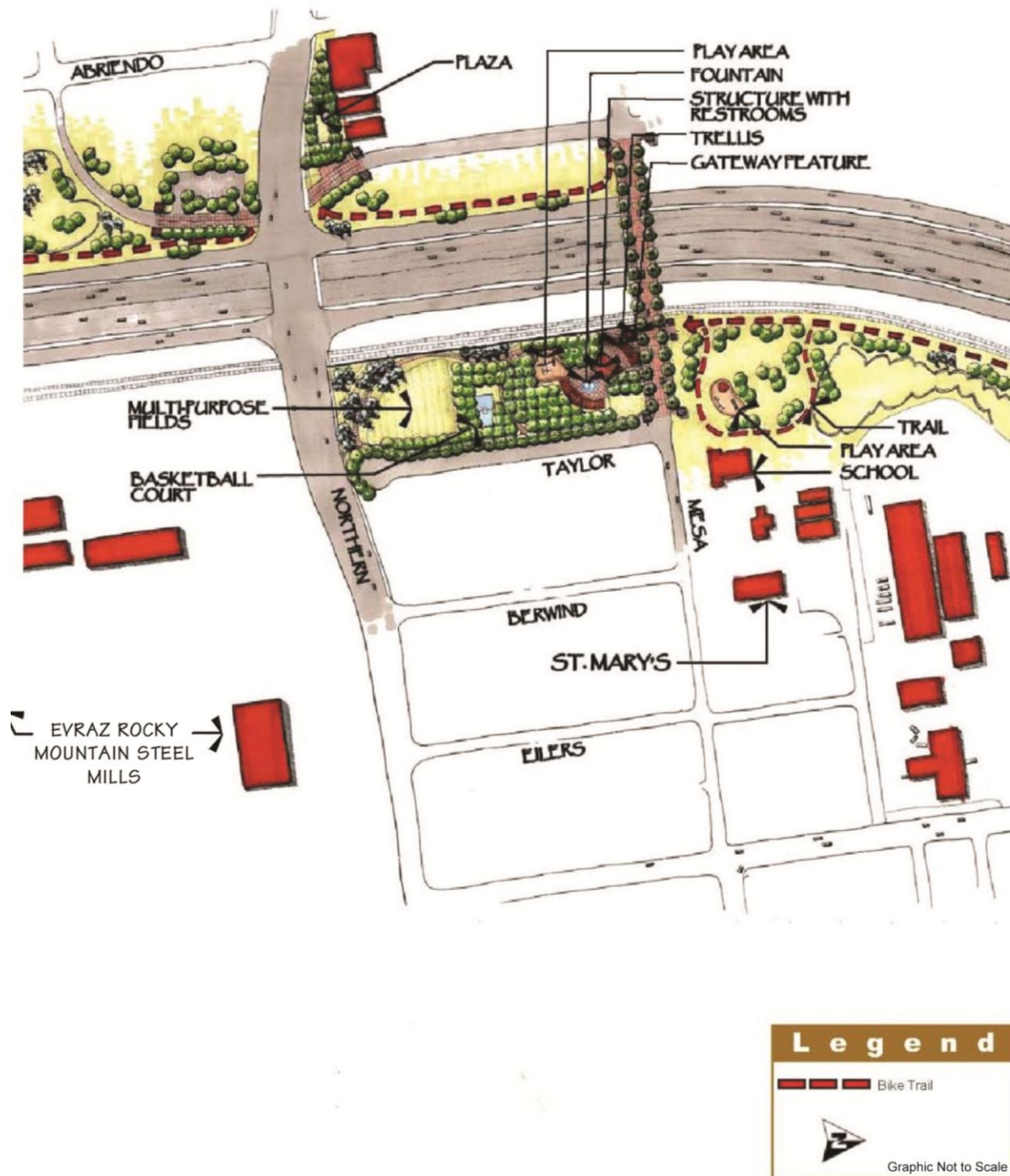
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative





**EXHIBIT 3.3-15**

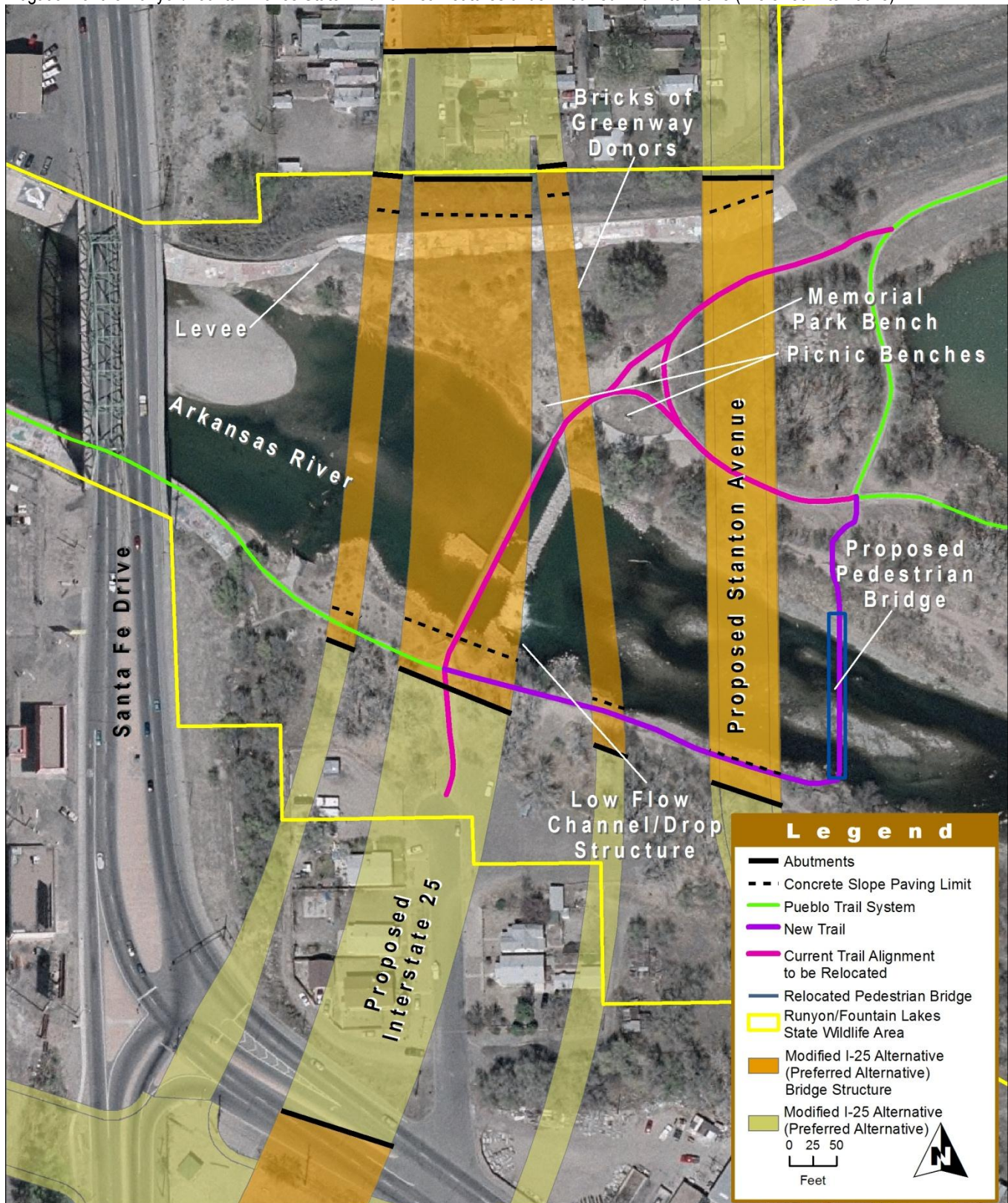
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative





**EXHIBIT 3.3-16**

Mitigation for the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area Features under Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)



**Benedict Park**

CDOT will construct a new Benedict Park south of the existing park location between Mesa Avenue and Northern Avenue. The new park would be a minimum 3.93 acres to a maximum 4.30 acres in size. This range reflects ongoing efforts to refine the design to avoid impacts to residential parcels south of Mesa Avenue. The new park will be constructed on remnant parcels of the land required for the changes in access due to the closures of Taylor Avenue and Rio Grande Avenue, as described in **Section 3.1**

**Transportation.** Playground equipment from the original Benedict Park will be relocated, most likely to the St. Mary's Church property. CDOT has discussed this mitigation with representatives from St. Mary's Church and will coordinate with the property owners prior to relocating the equipment. The mitigation plan for Benedict Park is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-17** and **Exhibit 3.3-18**. The new park plans proposed under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative) address several issues at the existing park, including lack of parking and the need for a shelter house, trees, and improved lighting.

The elevation of Northern Avenue and Mesa Avenue would allow the new Benedict Park to be constructed on an elevated berm to allow for an overlook into the Ervaz Rocky Mountain Steel Mill. The mainline of the interstate will be constructed lower than the existing grade so it will be out of the line of sight for the new park. Moving the park south of Mesa Avenue would improve access and reconnect neighborhoods that were severed from the park by the original construction of I-25. Large pedestrian-friendly sidewalks are proposed on Mesa Avenue to connect the neighborhoods east and west of I-25.

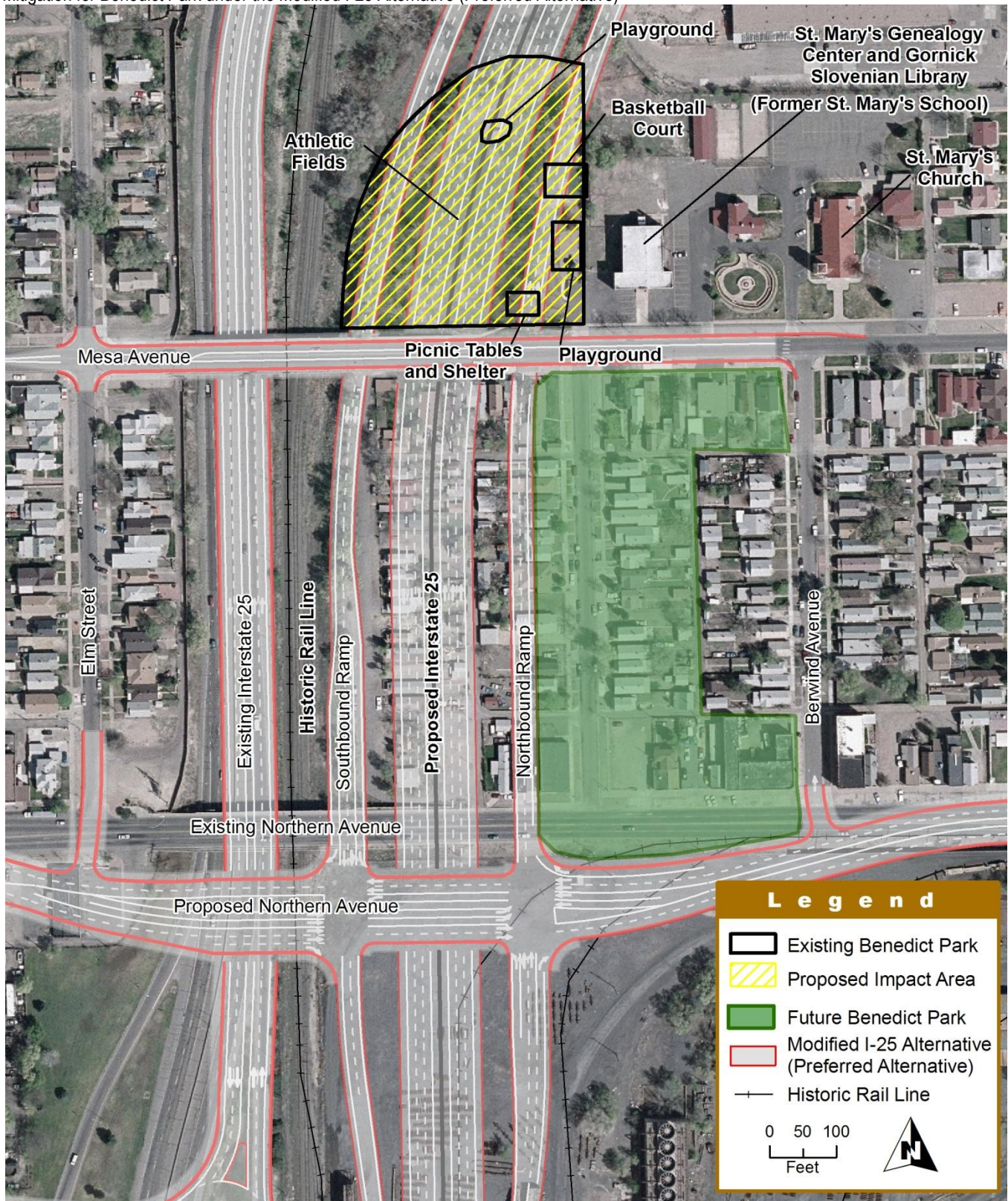
In accordance with LWCF program requirements, no overhead wires will be installed at the park. A sign acknowledging the assistance from the LWCF will be posted in a prominent public area visible to all visitors.

Improvements to Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative), which include a larger contiguous park area, more amenities, and improved access, will result in an overall positive impact to the park when compared to the No Action Alternative and the Existing I-25 Alternative. It is not possible to provide a contiguous park under the Existing I-25 Alternative.



**EXHIBIT 3.3-17**

Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)





**EXHIBIT 3.3-18**

Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative (Preferred Alternative)

